AMENDMENTS TO THE SPECIFICATION

Please enter the following amendments to the Specification as replacement paragraphs, with reference to the paragraph numbering in U.S. Patent Application Publication US 2004/0010493 (this application).

Please replace paragraph [0099] with the following replacement paragraph:

[0099]   More specifically, the user can obtain information of all the different ~~DB5 20~~ DBs 20 from the single meta DB server 40 by a single search without requiring immediate connectivity to the DBs 20 (DB servers 30). Since the locations (URLs) of the extracted DBs 20 (DB servers 30) are contained in the metadata, which are presented to the user, the user need only know the location (URL) of the meta DB server 40. Therefore, the user need not perform any troublesome operations, e.g., for detecting and accessing all distributed DB servers 30 in turn.

Please replace paragraph [0108] with the following replacement paragraph:

[0108]   After information of each DB 20 to be supported is registered, the meta DB server 40 acquires metadata 33 pertaining to the registered DBs 20 from the DB servers 30 in ~~step 53, step~~ S3, and registers the acquired metadata 33 in the meta DB 41 in step S4. More specifically, the meta DB server 40 collects all metadata 33 from a plurality of registered DB servers 30, and creates the meta DB 41 based on these data by modifying the collected data so as to provide better service to the user.

Please replace paragraphs [0110] and [0111] with the following replacement paragraphs:

[0110]   The preparation prior to search is completed. After that, when a search is made actually, the user inquires of the meta DB server 40 using the WWW browser 11 in ~~step 55~~ step S5. Then, the meta DB server 40 searches for ~~DB5 20~~ DBs 20 that match the user's inquiry using the meta DB 41 in ~~step 56~~ step S6. Then, a retrieval condition creation form page (GUI

control window) is formed using the retrieval result and metadata and sends it to the user

terminal 10 in step S7.

[0111]   The user checks in ~~step S8~~ step S8 if the retrieval result is satisfactory. If the result is

not satisfactory, the flow returns to ~~step S5~~ step S5, and the user inputs a keyword different from

the previous one to redo search. If the user is satisfied with the retrieval result, the flow advances

to ~~step S9~~ step S9. In step S9, the user creates a retrieval condition used for retrieving real data

from the extracted DB 20 using the presented retrieval condition creation form page, and issues it

as a retrieval request to the DB server 30.

Please replace paragraph [0124] with the following replacement paragraph:

[0124]   Referring to FIG. 6, the user connects the user terminal 10 to the meta DB server 40

via the network in ~~step S41~~ step S41. In response to this connection, the meta DB server 40

sends a search form of the meta DB 41 to the user terminal 10 in the HTML format in step S42.

Please replace paragraphs [0126] and [0127] with the following replacement
paragraphs:

[0126]   The meta DB server 40 forms a retrieval condition creation form for the DB 20 in the

HTML format using the retrieval result of the meta DB 41 and metadata, and sends it to the user

terminal 10 in ~~step S47~~ step S47. The user designates the retrieval condition of the DB 20 using

the presented retrieval condition creation form, and sends it to the meta DB server 40 in ~~step S48~~

step S48. The meta DB server 40 sends the received retrieval condition text (SQL) and the URL

of the DB server 30 corresponding to the DB 20 as the destination of the text to the user terminal

10 in step S49.

[0127]   Upon reception of such information, the user terminal 10 issues a retrieval condition

statement (SQL) to the DB server 30 indicated by the received URL as a retrieval request in step

S50. Upon reception of the retrieval request, the DB server 30 translates the retrieval request

into the format concordant with the DB 20 in step S51. The DB server 30 issues a retrieval

request (SQL) to the DB 20 to retrieve real data in step S52, and transmits the obtained retrieval result to the user terminal 10 in ~~step 553~~ step S53. The user terminal 10 acquires the retrieval execution result in ~~step 554~~ step S54, thus ending a series of search processes.

Please replace paragraph [0149] with the following replacement paragraph:

[0149]   As shown in FIG. 10, column x1 on view X corresponds to columns a1, b1, ~~and ci~~ and c1 on real tables A, B, and C, column x4 on view X to column a4 on real table A, column x8 on view X to columns b5 and c2 on real tables B and C, and column x9 on view X to column c3 on real table C. The join processing of this embodiment selects one real column corresponding to each of four columns x1, x4, x8, and x9 including data to be retrieved so as to minimize the number of joined tables upon search.

Please replace paragraph [0151] with the following replacement paragraph:

[0151]   First, a real table having the largest number of links (the number of columns including data to be retrieved) is extracted from real tables A, B, and C. In the initial state before joining tables, real table A includes two columns a1 and a4, real table B includes two columns ~~bi~~ ~~and~~ b1 and b5, and real table C includes three columns c1, c2, and c3. Hence, since real table C has the largest number of links (the number of columns to be selected), it is selected, as shown in FIG. 11.